

# BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Lynnne Melena, BPA President

### Gunn Entry Road to Be Altered as First Step in Arastradero Road Redesign

The long-running plan to reduce the number of lanes on Charleston and Arastradero roads will move to its next phase this summer with changes to the Gunn High School entry road. Those changes are needed to reduce morning back-ups at Gunn before the City will consider reducing the number of travel lanes on Arastradero, as it has done on Charleston Road. The City Council decided to permanently reduce the number of lanes on Charleston, from four to two (plus left turn lanes and a median), on May 12.

The primary purpose of the Charleston-Arastradero Corridor Improvement Project is to make it a safer place for pedestrians and bicyclists. There are 11 schools along the corridor and a significant amount of new development coming on-line in the next few years (some of it now completed). Traffic engineers consider four-lane undivided roadways with over 12,000 vehicles per day (which describes Charleston and Arastradero) the most dangerous roadways for pedestrians to cross.

Planning began in 2003 when the City Council directed staff to prepare a plan that would:

- Reduce accidents,

- Improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists, and

- Improve the quality of life and visual amenities

All of this was to be achieved while maintaining existing travel times in the corridor and minimizing diversion of traffic into the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

In 2004, the City Council approved a plan which called for reducing the number of travel lanes on most of Charleston and Arastradero roads from four to two (plus left turn lanes at intersections and a landscaped median between intersections). In 2006, the decision was made to conduct a trial project in two phases. Phase 1, implemented later in 2006, included striping changes on Charleston to test whether the number of lanes could be reduced, as well as the construction of a westbound right turn lane at the Gunn High School entry to reduce congestion. Phase 1 also includes traffic adaptive signal timing (see further discussion below).

Phase 2, comprised of either a two-lane or four-lane (with left turn lanes and medians) striping plan for Arastradero Road, is to be implemented in 2009 when Arastradero is to be resurfaced in conjunction with the annual street maintenance project.

### Gunn High School Entry Road Changes

Even with the new Gunn right turn lane and traffic signal changes, traffic still backs up for a half-mile on Arastradero between 7:40 and 8:10 a.m. due to the concentrated commute to Gunn High School. Before a decision can be made on whether to narrow Arastradero to either the same roadway as Charleston, or four lanes with a narrow median, the Gunn congestion problem has to be solved.

The City's traffic consultants have studied several options and, working with school and city staff, have concluded that the best one is to extend the two inbound lanes of traffic further into the campus. Right now, morning traffic has to merge into one lane 150 feet into the campus, and this, in turn, causes the back-up on to Arastradero. The new plan would move the merge about 500 feet further into the campus allowing

[ CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 ]

### BPA WELCOMING PARTY Sunday, September 7th 2-4 p.m.

Whether "old," or "new," or "in-between," please come to a getting-to-know neighbors gathering in Bol Park! Free Ice cream! If you would like to participate in arrangements suggest activities, or refreshments, please contact Gwen Luce, BPA Welcoming Chair 650-224-3670 or [gluce@cbnocal.com](mailto:gluce@cbnocal.com)

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Arastradero congestion to clear more quickly. This change can only be implemented by re-routing outbound traffic past the administration building and adjacent carpool and school bus drop-off areas. (See illustration.) A trial re-stripping plan will be installed this summer and tested when school opens in the fall.

**Trial Plan on Charleston**

The evaluation of the Charleston Road striping trial has a bearing on the future of Arastradero Road. According to the traffic consultants, the Charleston re-stripping plan met all of the quantifiable measures of success (excluding several that cannot be measured until more time has passed). Average travel time increased by 11 percent during the morning, but decreased during the evening. These changes were considered to be "not substantial," and traffic adaptive signal timing (see below) should improve travel time from 15 to 20 percent. There were no significant increases in delay at intersections. Average speeds were reduced by 10 percent, for example, from 31 mph to 28 mph near Carlson court. (Posted speed is 25 mph.) The City expects further reductions when actual median island with trees and landscaping replace the painted striping.

Strong support for the Charleston Road re-stripping plan was voiced at the Planning Commission and City Council meetings, although some speakers identified specific problem areas.

**Arastradero Plans**

Arastradero Road carries 18,000 vehicles a day, compared to Charleston's 13,000, and has the added problem of congestion at Gunn and Terman in the morning. The City will be analyzing two options for Arastradero after the Gunn High School entry changes have been made this summer. They are:

- Three lanes with one lane in each direction, plus left-turn lanes at intersec-

tions and a 16-foot wide median, as on Charleston. Under this option, there would be a 14-foot wide bike/parking lane on one side and an 8-foot wide bike/parking lane on the other side with no parking from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

- Four lanes with two lanes in each direction plus narrow medians and narrow left-turn lanes. Under this option there would be 7-foot wide bike/parking lanes with no parking 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on both sides.

Under both options, there would likely be some changes to the Arastradero/Donald/Terman intersections. Also, Arastradero would remain four lanes as it is now between the entrance to Gunn and the Miranda/Foothill intersection.

A recommendation that is likely to be implemented with either striping plan is to install a mid-block cross-walk at Juana Briones Park. The proposed design includes a raised concrete median refuge. Pedestrians will be able to cross half-way and then wait for traffic to clear and cross the rest of the street.

City staff is expected to make a recommendation to the City Council on the Arastradero striping plan in January, 2009. The plan would be implemented in summer 2009.

**Traffic Adaptive Signal Timing**

The City is expected to implement "traffic adaptive signal timing" at most of the intersections along the Charleston/

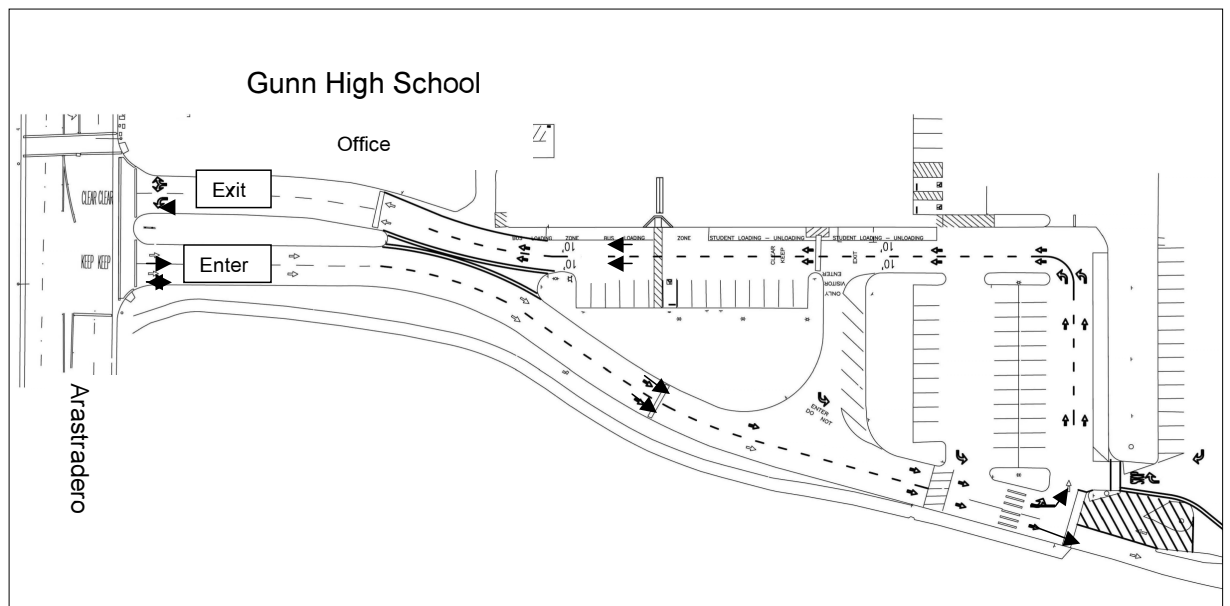
Arastradero corridor this year. Both the physical improvements and the software are in place. With traffic adaptive signal timing, signals are not controlled by a time clock on a set schedule. Instead, traffic flow along the roadway is monitored minute-by-minute, and "green" time at an intersection is adjusted to the number of vehicles waiting to pass through it. The result is that there is little or no "wasted" green time-when no traffic is passing through the intersection. As soon as traffic clears in one direction, the signal changes to "red," and traffic on the other two streets can move through the intersection.

**Funding**

Funding for permanent improvements (construction of medians, installation of landscaping) will likely come from federal, state and regional grants. Funds generated by local traffic impact fees will be used to provide local matches for these grants.

For further information about the Charleston-Arastradero Improvement Project is available at the City of Palo Alto web site: [www.cityofpaloalto.org](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org) under Agendas/Minutes/Reports. See the May 12, 2008 City Council meeting agenda and reports.

*Representatives of the Barron Park Association have served on the Stakeholders Group for the Charleston Arastradero Corridor Study They have included Patrick Muffler, John King and Lynnne Melena.*



# FIRST EVER BARRON PARK GREEN TOUR

By Bob Moss



**Sharon and Tom Wagner's house was one of two houses on the Green Tour that was built with a passive solar design that maximizes solar exposure and incorporates many other energy-conserving features.**



**The home of Romie and Mark Georgia features a sustainable garden as well as photovoltaic panels**



**Ann and Allen Burrell's bounteous back yard was one of the gardens on the Green Tour. They harvest beans for months each summer from the two feet of earth between their driveway and a north-facing wall being careful to leave 18 inches uncultivated around the foundation.**

On June 22, the Barron Park Association revived a valued community tradition, a home and garden tour. This time, the focus turned to an issue of vital importance to our community and to our planet's future. The 2008 event highlighted 13 houses or gardens where homeowners have made changes that are helping them tread more lightly on the environment. The Green Tour showcased drought tolerant landscaping, organic gardens, photovoltaic panels, entire houses designed to minimize energy use, and other energy or water-saving features. The staging area at Bol Park also featured commercial vendors for PV panels and other

energy conservation services, non-profit organizations and City utilities.

While many of those on the Green Tour began modifying their homes and gardens many years ago and perhaps for other reasons, they are making a difference. The Green Tour was a chance for all of us to find out more about what they are doing and how they are doing it. The hope was that that by visiting the homes, talking to the owners, and learning from the exhibitors, tour participants would be inspired to take the next step toward a more environmentally friendly home and lifestyle.

## EMAIL LISTS

The BPA has three email lists: bpa-news, bpa-issues, and bpa-misc. They are hosted at Google Groups (moved in January). To join bpa-news, go to <http://groups.google.com/group/bpa-news> and click on "Join this group." Similarly for the other lists.

For more information on these email lists, go to the BPA home page—<http://www.bpaonline.org> and click on the button "BPA Email Lists."

## BPA NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE

We have created PDF files of past newsletters. See the complete newsletters, including full-color photos!

The web editions of the BPA Newsletters usually appear one or two months after the paper editions are mailed. The files may take awhile to download (sizes given in advance).

BPA Website: <http://www.bpaonline.org>

PDF full color newsletter archive: [www.bpaonline.org/www2/BP-News/index.html](http://www.bpaonline.org/www2/BP-News/index.html)

# 30TH BPA MAY FÊTE



Photo by Jo Hamilton

Little dancers weave the maypole ribbons first.

## Great music, great neighbors, a great time

Local merchants and new leadership came through to bring us another May Fête success, the first in the fête's 30-year history without founder Paul Edwards on site.

The program offered three chances for community dancing, with a demonstration Maypole mid afternoon as well as a round dance just before the traditional Maypole weaving dance. An unexpected but welcome wind added drama to the handing out of ribbons, but no tangles disrupted the weave.

The Fish Market donated smoked fish platters, served under the redwoods; Hobe's donated their signature coffee cake; and the Barron Park Florist gave us the bouquet for the top of the pole. El Grullense offered a full menu on site; John King and crew grilled burgers and dogs; and the BPA sold bargain It's-Its, which are produced locally and available to us at non-profit prices.

The garden steam railroad, alas, was stranded in Pleasanton, but Erik Struck came through with an electric train on a loop track. Bikes were registered, voters were informed, history was learned.

As usual, the community made the fête happen. We're listing below the names we caught, but thanks also to the others who pitched in with what needed doing, and apologies to the many we're forgetting.

Dance Calling: Bob Fraley, Joyce Uggl  
 Carpentry: Larry Breed, Rich Elder, Bob Frost, Joe Melena, Bud Rubin, Iein Valdez  
 Face Painting: Morgan Bricca—Murals by Morgan; Tara Golshan; Elaine Liu  
 Ice Cream Dishes: Tom Moore and Jeff Dean  
 Music Coordinator: Gary Breitbard  
 Mistress of Children's Activities: Jen Hess  
 Pinwheels: Madeline Bennet, Madison Thomas  
 Paper Aerodrome: Arjun Dubashi  
 Cookie Provisioners: Alison King, Sue Breitbard, Jen Hess  
 Cookie-Decorating Table: Barron Park Girl Scouts, Troop #898. Adi, Alicia, Amy, Anna, Dakota, Elizabeth, Jessica, Jordan, Julie, Shara  
 Chair & Table Yeomen: Jason King, John King  
 Mother Goose: Jeanne Lythcott  
 Paper Crafts: Viveca Eliscu  
 Grill Team & Clean-up Angels: John King, Haley King, Louis Lehot, John Salwitz, Karen Saxena, Dave Thomas, Jeff Smith, Dillon Thomas, & others  
 Maypole Prep: Bob Fraley, Paul Edwards,

Larry Breed, Gary Breitbard, Jena Rauti  
 Itinerant Historian: Doug Graham  
 Other Tabling and Logistics: Patrick Muffer, Linnie Melena, Doug Moran, Gwen Luce, Palo Alto Neighborhood Disaster Activities (PANDA), Palo Alto Police and Fire Departments, Art Liberman, Sue Lutner, Ann Burrel, Jerome Coonen, Tom Wagner, Romie Georgia, Galen Poulton, Annette McGarr

Making It Happen: Diana Wittenbrock

## Comments from Fête Co-Chair John King

Firstly, let me thank all of you who helped with coordinating and driving May Fête 2008 to a most successful event. I can't imagine this having not happened, when you look at the turnout and the smiles on the children's faces. Bravo!

We had a record number of sponsors both paid and in-kind, as well as terrific activities during the May Fete and music that is still running through my head.

It was a day of great community spirit, of solicited and unsolicited support.

A huge thank you to our event planner Diana Wittenbrock and the Barron Park Association Board for supporting her hiring so that we could have the 30th Annual May Fête.



# 30TH BPA MAY FETE



The Wildcat Morris dancers, who joined the fete this year, grew out of a family summer camp run by the Bay Area Country Dance Society. This year's camp will feature Maypole dancing (see <http://www.familydancecamp.org>)



Craig Martin and the other musicians moved out to the lawn for the large Maypole weaving dance.



The Mad Mollies, including Susan Gere, Elizabeth Gioumousis, and Amy Baldwin performed traditional Morris dancing.

## THANKS TO OUR FETE SPONSORS:

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Alhouse-King              | Hobee's California Restaurants |
| Barron Park Florist       | Holistic Physical Therapy      |
| Luther Burbank Savings    | Candice Kistner                |
| Classic Pet Grooming      | Gwen Luce                      |
| Cooley, Godward & Kronish | Al Peterson Roofing & Repairs  |
| Copy Factory              | James Witt                     |
| Curves - Palo Alto South  | Taqueria el Grullense          |
| Driftwood Deli & Market   |                                |
| Ernie's Wine & Liquors    |                                |
| The Fish Market           |                                |

All photos this page by Sue Luttner

# 30TH BPA MAY FETE



Grace and Ida Holmes wore their face paint beautifully.



The Bugnion family, Adrien, Marie, Ed, and Victor, relaxed on the grass.



Julie, Francesca, and Amy, along with other girl scouts from Troop # 898, staffed the cookie-decorating table.



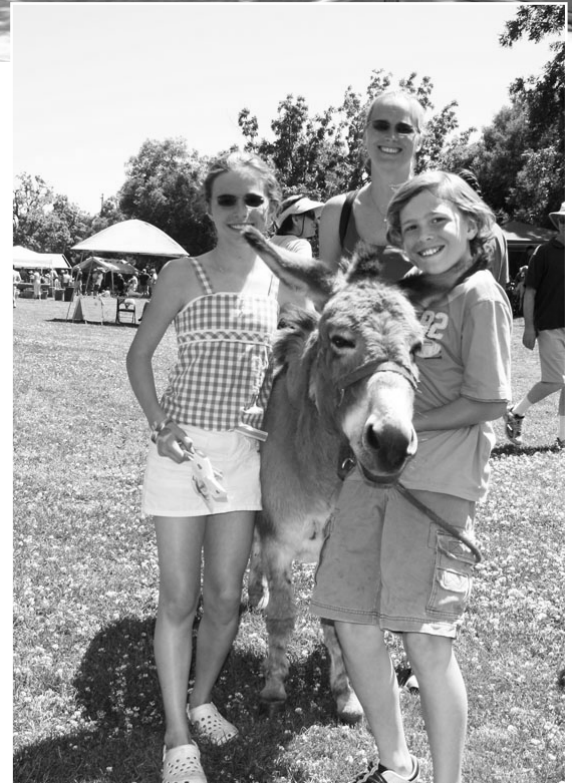
Joss Finseth was disappointed that the steam engines couldn't be there, but he enjoyed the electric train while eating lunch.

All photos this page by Sue Luttrier

# 30TH BPA MAY FETE



**"Broceliande": Margaret Davis, Kristoph Klover, Karl Franzen and Kris Yenney**



**Madison, Becky & Dyllan Thomas, donkey handlers for about the past year.**



**Selene Foster (seated on lawn) with her American Alpine goats agrees to rent them to Susan Giovannetto (standing) to clear Susan's backyard property on Tippewingo. Goats eat everything, including poison oak, and can work on steep hillsides. If you'd like to talk with Selene, call (415) 260-4292.**

All photos this page by Jo Hamilton



# 30TH BPA MAY FETE



Photo by Jo Hamilton

**Eric & daughter Riley Hill at their first May Fete.**



Photo by Jo Hamilton

**Morgan Bricca face painting Talia into a fairy.**



Photo by Sue Luttner

**Raghu and Neel Murthy came dressed for the hot weather.**



Photo by Sue Luttner

**Rachel Gates had a good visit to the cookie-decorating table.**

# 30TH BPA MAY FETE



**Bob Frost helped with the stage on fête day, but his bigger neighborhood job is chief donkey handler.**



**Edith and Leland Smith came by the fête to enjoy the live music. Edith's donkey-art T-shirts were on sale at the fête, proceeds benefitting the donkeys. The last of the shirts featuring Micky went out of stock on fête day.**



**Isaac Moore found the stage assembly worth careful watching.**



**Maddie Bennet and Loanne Moore came early and helped set up.**



**Jeanne Lythcott provided a quiet lap and stories for the little ones.**

All photos this page by Sue Luttner

# THE CREEKS OF BARRON PARK—PART ONE

By Douglas Graham, Barron Park Historian

## The Modern Creeks

Our neighborhood has two creeks running through it—something that not all residents realize. I remember talking to one resident in January, 1983, who had six inches of muddy water in her garage and only a few more inches to go before it invaded her house. She asked me “Where is all this water coming from?” I told her “The creek is overflowing at Laguna Avenue.” Her reply was “What creek? I didn’t know we had any creeks around here.” She had lived in Barron Park for more than five years. She was representative of some residents, then and now, who do not know that we have creeks.

I believe that many of our residents know that we have two creeks, Matadero and Barron. They know where the creeks are and what the channels look like. However, there are few who know very much about the history of the creeks—how they got the way they are and what impact they have had on the lives of the people in Barron Park.

In this and other parts of this article to be published in future newsletters, I will tell you the story of our creeks—at least the part of it that I know. In this first part, I will describe the modern creeks in detail, then will tell what they were like before Europeans settled this area, and lastly will cover the beginning of channeling and flood control in the Nineteenth Century.

## Potentially confusing geographical nomenclature, or how mixed up do I want you to be?

A word to the wise before you proceed further in this article: I have included many references to compass directions to help make locations clear. By local (mid-peninsula) convention, I am calling the direction toward the Bay “east,” even though it is closer to north. The directions on El Camino Real are “north” towards Menlo Park and “south” towards Mountain View, even though the true directions are closer to west and east. Towards the mountains

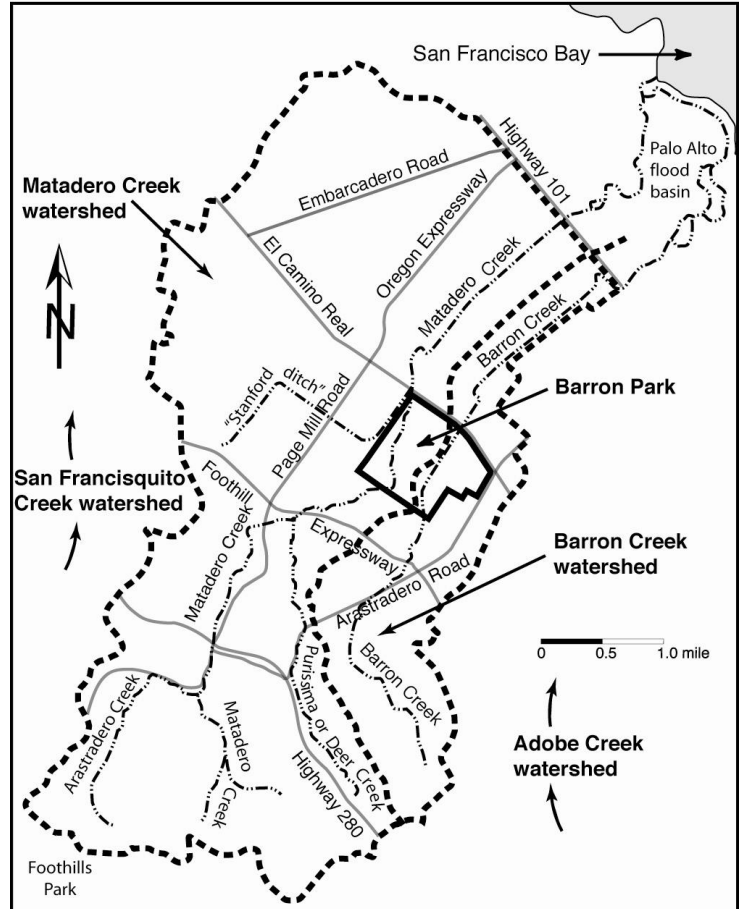
will be “west” even though they are obviously south of us. This usage conforms to the road signs on 101, El Camino Real and I-280 and I will stick to it for convention’s sake even though to do so offends my sense of geographical accuracy. I offer my apologies in advance to my fellow nit-pickers.

Another confusing thing is the terms “left bank” and “right bank.” Strictly speaking, they apply when you face downstream, toward the ocean, going with the flow. So, if you stand on the Matadero Avenue bridge and face towards El Camino Real, the right bank is the one to your right, the one with Matadero Avenue on it. If you’re in the Navy you may look at things the other way around, but I’ll let that pass.

## Where can you see the creeks?

In our neighborhood, the best places to see Matadero Creek are in Bol Park (there are steps down to the creek at one spot), at the public bridges, and along Matadero Avenue from Tippawingo to the Creekside Inn. There are three public bridges; the Regional Bikepath Bridge at the end of Bol Park by the donkey pasture, the Laguna Avenue Bridge, and the Matadero Avenue Bridge at Tippawingo and Josina Avenues. You can also walk through the grounds of the Creekside Inn, which has a footbridge and attractive landscaping.

Map 1 – Barron Creek and Matadero Creek Watersheds



Source: Santa Clara Valley Water District.  
Map adapted in 2008 by Patrick Muffer and Doug Graham.

Barron Creek is best seen at the Sedimentation Basin between Gunn High School and the Regional Bikepath, which crosses the creek on a bridge across the middle of the basin. The next-best is along upper Los Robles Avenue, from Gunn High School to Laguna Avenue. On this stretch the creek is in an open, unlined ditch with semi-natural vegetation along it.

## Where do the creeks come from?

The creeks rise in the nearby foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains and flow through Los Altos Hills and Palo Alto to the Palo Alto Flood Basin in the baylands, which then drains into San Francisco Bay. In the middle of their courses they pass through Barron Park. Please see Map 1, Barron Creek and Matadero Creek Watersheds. Rainfall in the creek watersheds

depends partly on where you are. In the hills area it averages 20 or more inches per year and in Barron Park probably about 16-18 inches.

### **Matadero Creek watershed**

The larger of our two creeks is Matadero Creek. According to the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) in the Matadero Creek Planning Study of 1974 its watershed is about 4,900 acres or roughly 7.7 square miles—relatively small for a named creek. There are 4,650 acres above El Camino Real (ECR), including 690 drained by “The Stanford Ditch,” a tributary which joins the creek underground at ECR. Matadero Creek has three major headwater tributaries, Arastradero, Upper Matadero, and Purissima Creeks.

### **Matadero’s three headwaters tributaries**

First there is Arastradero Creek, which heads at about 860 feet above mean sea level (MSL) on the valley-side slope of the vista ridge at Foothill Park, then flows down through Arastradero Preserve and alongside Arastradero Road to join Matadero Creek at Page Mill Road.

The second is upper Matadero Creek itself which drains most of the Palo Alto Hills Country Club and has two headwater creeks draining the valley-side slopes of the Altamont Hills neighborhood of Los Altos Hills at about 860 feet above MSL. The middle stretches of Matadero Creek drain the area along Page Mill Expressway from the hills west of I-280 to Junipero Serra Boulevard, including the east slopes of Stanford’s Radio Telescope Hill (“the Dish” area).

Third is Purissima Creek, also known as Deer Creek on its lower stretches. It heads at about 790 feet above MSL, high in the Elizabeth Road area of Los Altos Hills. Purissima drains the western and northern slopes of Coyote Hill before it joins Matadero Creek just as the creek goes underneath Junipero Serra Boulevard.

### **Barron Creek Watershed**

Contrasted to Matadero in size is Barron Creek, with a watershed of about 2.5 square miles. 1,375 acres are above the Sedimentation Basin at Gunn High School, and a total of 1,575 above ECR. Barron Creek heads in Los Altos Hills, in the val-

ley along Fremont Road, above the Town Hall area. The highest elevations drained are about 500 feet above MSL, along the ridge that runs between Purissima Creek (where I-280 runs) and Barron Creek (where Fremont Road runs). Lower down, Barron Creek runs along Arastradero Road and drains the southern and eastern slopes of Coyote Hill, including the area where the Roche Pharmaceutical Plant is. It then ducks under Foothill Expressway and almost immediately reaches the Sedimentation Basin and Gunn High School.

### **Are these creeks always flowing?**

The answer is both yes and no. Neither creek originally flowed year-around, in a regular channel all the way to the Bay. I believe that there are stretches of each of the major headwater tributaries of Matadero Creek that flow year-around, but I cannot confirm that from personal experience. However, it is true that, today and always, Matadero Creek flowed year-around past the donkey pasture and most of Bol Park. There was a permanent Ohlone “summer village” in that area, indicating that a dependable water source existed there. The creek normally went dry in the summer and fall before reaching the point where the Laguna Avenue Bridge is now.

Josina Bol confirmed that the creek flowed year-around past their home on Roble Ridge when they came here in 1936, and this was long before there was any significant amount of development higher in the watershed. In more recent times there has been a small amount of summer and fall flow contributed by irrigation runoff from lawns, but this did not make a significant difference in the distance that the low flows reached down the creek channel before sinking into the sand and gravel. See more discussion of this near the end of this article under the heading “The creek ran dry.”

In Barron Park nowadays, however, Matadero’s low flow is greatly enhanced by disposal of the cleaned-up water from the Hillview-Porter Remediation Project. The water is pumped out of a deep aquifer underneath the Stanford Research Park and part of Barron Park, to draw out the chemical pollution from various companies that occurred mostly in the 1960s and

1970s. The water is purified—to levels purer than drinking water—and is released into Matadero Creek. This goes on all year, and has resulted in summer and fall flows beyond El Camino Real. The remediation project began in the early 1990s and is nearly finished, so, some year soon, this unnatural enhancement of flows will cease.

Barron Creek wasn’t originally called “Dry Creek” for nothing. There may be year-around flow on a short stretch in its headwaters but it has always been summer-dry in Barron Park. However, there is almost always some water left in the Sedimentation Basin even in the autumn before the rains begin again.

### **Bridges, bridges and more bridges**

Both creeks are spanned by public and private bridges. When you enter Barron Park from El Camino Real (ECR) on Matadero Avenue, the first single-family detached homes you see are on the right, on the opposite side of Matadero Creek, and are reached by four private bridges. Matadero Avenue then crosses to the north or left bank on a concrete bridge first built in 1929. It was later rebuilt to provide a larger flood channel, in 1978-9. There may well have been a wooden bridge on the avenue before 1929, but it also may have been a ford.

About 0.3 mile west of the crossing, Laguna Avenue intersects and then bends to the left as you pass Bol Park and you come to the second bridge. It is concrete, was built in 1933, and was definitely the first bridge in that part of Barron Park. It replaced a winding segment of Laguna Avenue that bent further to the left, approximately on the line of today’s Laguna Court, then dipped down in a dugout ramp to the creek bed and forded the creek to the right or south bank where La Calle Court is now. As soon as it climbed out of the creek channel, however, it bent sharply to the right and hugged the edge of the creek bank up to Laguna, where it turned left and resumed the familiar line of Laguna Avenue. Old-timers recalled giving their kids a thrill by plunging their “tin lizzies” into the cut, barreling across the creek splashing water gaily, then gunning the motor to make it up the other bank.

If you enter Barron Park from ECR on Los Robles Avenue, you are on the right bank



of Barron Creek, which is to your right—although this is not obvious, since it lies in a five-foot concrete pipe culvert, buried beneath the SCVWD easement that extends west to Laguna Avenue. Prior to the culvert construction in 1958, Barron Creek was an open ditch on this 0.6 mile stretch, and was spanned by several dozen private bridges that provided access to the homes from Los Robles Avenue. Partway along this stretch, at La Donna Avenue, is a concrete bridge, now buried except for two curb-like railings.

At Laguna Avenue is another concrete bridge, built in 1933 when Laguna Avenue was improved. The downstream side is buried like the bridge at La Donna. Above Laguna Avenue, Barron Creek still exists as an open, unlined ditch with semi-natural vegetation. It is spanned by five private bridges and by one public bridge, which carries El Cerrito Road over to the left bank.

In part two of this article, to be published later, I will discuss the role played by some of the private bridges in the flooding of both creeks.

**Creebank Properties**

One of the nice things about the way that Barron Park has been developed and protected is the existence of 74 homes with properties that include stretches of creek bank, sometimes nicely landscaped and often including native riparian vegetation. Large heritage Liveoaks and Valley Oaks are common, with California Buckeyes, Toyon and native shrubs filling in a lower canopy. Occasionally prominent are redwoods, Monterey Pines, Walnuts and other exotics. Several decks extend out a few feet over the bank to provide the homeowners with attractive creek views. These creek bank properties add a touch of wildness that helps to flavor the entire neighborhood.

Almost half of the length of Matadero Creek in Barron Park is privately owned. From ECR, both banks are owned by the Creekside Inn. Immediately upstream from the Inn there is one house on each bank. From that point upstream (west), there are six more homes on the left bank, four of which are connected by private bridges to Matadero Avenue. They own both sides of the creek. Above these four,

the right bank is owned by the City, which maintains the deep well and pumping station for an emergency water supply. The left bank is owned by a homeowner on Tippawingo. The reader should understand that, where each bank of a creek has a different owner, the property line is the center of the creek bed.

Above the Matadero Avenue Bridge, the right (south) bank is privately owned by 12 homeowners on Josina Avenue. Then there is the public property of the Palo Alto Unified School District at Barron Park School. Above the school are four private homes on La Calle Court and one on Laguna Avenue. Above the Laguna Avenue Bridge the right bank has four homeowners, then one on Laguna Oaks Court, five on Ilima Way (including the author’s property) and one on McGregor Way.

The left (north bank), starting at the Matadero Avenue Bridge, is the property of four homeowners on Matadero Avenue, then four on Julie Court, and seven more on Matadero (a new cul-de-sac is just now being developed from two of these). Continuing up the left bank, there are five creek bank homes on La Mata Way, three on Laguna Court and one on Laguna Avenue at the bridge. From Laguna to the Bikepath Bridge, the left bank is city property, part of Bol Park. Above the Bikepath bridge the left bank has three homes: two of these properties extend across the creek and the right bank portions (non buildable) comprise the donkey pasture. There are a total of 62 creek bank homeowners along Matadero Creek, plus the Creekside Inn, the school and the park.

The longest stretch of Barron Creek in our neighborhood is buried underground, but, above Laguna Avenue there are 12 creek bank homeowners on the left bank. Their properties all extend across the creek to Los Robles Avenue on the right bank.

**WILDLIFE IN THE CREEKS**

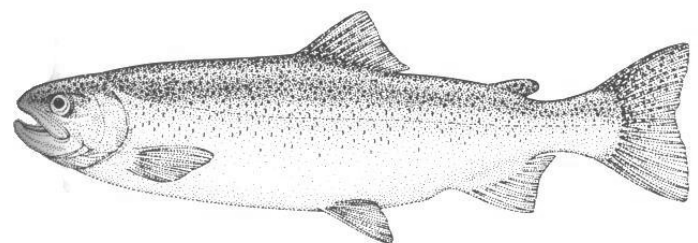
**Mountain Lions, Herons and Steelhead**

One might not think that such small creeks would harbor much in the way of wildlife, but they have provided



sightings of such varied animals as mountain lions, steelhead trout and great blue herons. Matadero Creek in particular provides a “wildlife highway” extending unbroken from the high foothills to El Camino Real. This highway is a regular nightly route for Raccoons, Opossums and skunks—see the photograph of a raccoon in a creek (not Matadero or Barron). Less ordinary are mountain lions—there have been several confirmed sightings in the past five years at Bol Park. Deer also use the creeks to access good browsing in parks and yards (including one that got confused and wandered in the streets around La Donna Avenue in the spring of 2008).

There is apparently a steelhead trout run, or the annual potential for one, on Matadero Creek, because adults have been spotted making their way upstream to spawn. Needless to say, this occurs only during rainy-season freshets on the creek. These are the only times when there is sufficient water depth all the way from the bay to the year-around flowing stretches in the foothills headwaters. Those stretches are where the trout spawn their eggs in clean gravel beds. The eggs hatch and the tiny fish grow to fingerling size before making their way, during another freshet, to the bay and the open ocean. Please see the drawing of a steelhead trout.



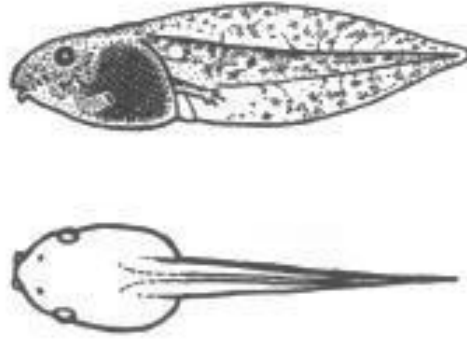
*Oncorhynchus mykiss*, steelhead trout

Water birds are frequent visitors to our creeks, particularly to the Sedimentation Basin at Gunn High School and to the year-around flowing stretch of Matadero Creek at Bol Park. I have seen Great Blue Herons on my creek bank, both adults and juveniles, and a Grey Heron once. The Great Blue Herons are spectacular—they have wingspans nearly up to six feet—when you startle one that is fishing in the creek, it may fly up right over your head and it is like meeting a flying dinosaur.



Common Egrets are frequent visitors to the creeks, especially in the spring—see the drawing. A pair of Mallards visit every spring and fall at my home, and multiple pairs visit and even breed at the Sedimentation Basin. As I write this in May, 2008, there are ducklings there. Wood Ducks have also been seen there frequently. Several years ago, one Mallard family took their ducklings across El Camino Real at Vista Avenue, one afternoon, with help from a Barron Park resident who happened on the scene and acted as an impromptu traffic guard.

Of even greater interest to the children of Barron Park is some of the smaller wildlife—like the crayfish that they like to catch in the early summer in Matadero Creek. Once I had to gently persuade a boy who had collected a half-dozen crayfish in a pail, that it was really better if he put them back, since they would just die if



he took them home. The fun is in the catching, anyway.

### Do you mourn the passing of the Tree Frogs?

Another collection item is tadpoles. There used to be tremendous numbers of Pacific Tree Frog tadpoles in both creeks during May and June (the breeding season is January through July), but there are very few nowadays and in some years hardly any. If there are many, they are relatively easy to catch, particularly if they are in that delicate developmental phase when they have already grown their legs but still have a sizeable tail. The legs seem to hinder them from making quick dashes to escape capture. They are about one inch long—see the drawing of the tadpoles.

The mature tree frogs range from 1.25 to 1.5 inches long and spend most of their lives off the ground in trees or other vegetation. Please see the drawing of the mature frogs. Be advised that the coloration of the back is highly variable—green, tan, gray, brown or black. They may change color from dark to light phase in a few minutes. The underside is cream to yellowish.

When I first moved to Barron Park in 1972, there were many hundreds—probably

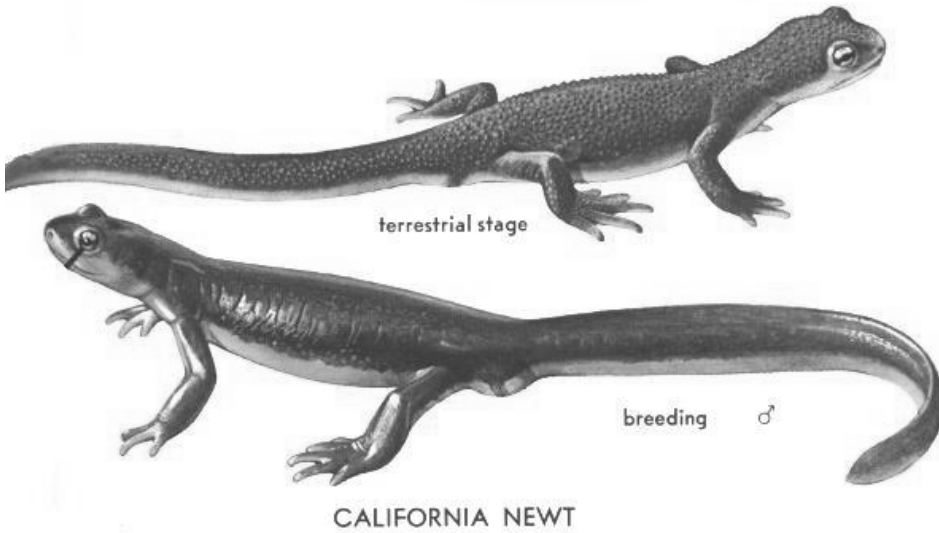


thousands of Pacific Tree Frogs to be found in Barron Park every year. They are the most commonly heard frog on the Pacific Coast. The call is a loud two-parted “kreck-ek” lasting about one second, the last syllable with a rising inflection. The effect is more musical than the written description suggests. The nightly tree frog chorus along Matadero Creek was almost deafening in the mating season and loud during all the warmer months. If you would step out of your house after dark and walk to the edge of the creek bank, all the frog noise would cease, almost instantly like they were all on the same switch. Then, if you stood still and stayed silent, after thirty seconds or so, a frog or two would begin again with their calls. Slowly, others would join until the full chorus was in swing in about two minutes. Such small disturbances would propagate up and down the creek in waves.

The tree frogs are not confined to the immediate vicinity of the creeks. I recently spoke with a Barron Park resident who lives on La Donna Avenue near Los Robles—about 0.4 mile from an open section of either creek—who reminisced about the loud nightly chorus when she moved in during the late 1970s.

### The tree frogs were our canaries

This frog heaven came to an abrupt end in the early 1980s. I will discuss in Part 3 of this article to be published, the infamous incident of pollution of Matadero Creek with wheelchair decontamination solvent by the VA Hospital in 1982. Suffice it to say here that the solvent dumping turned the creek water milky white, with a chemical stench detectible more than 50 feet from the creek bank, and it killed every animal in the creek, amphibian, fish and invertebrate alike. One can safely presume that the chemicals penetrated the mud in the creek bed and persisted for years (they are not biodegradable). This is significant not just because they leach back into the clean water that is constantly flowing down from above the pollution source, but mainly because the frogs overwinter by sleeping in the mud. Within two years of the incident, tree frogs nearly became extinct in Barron Park. Thus, for us the tree frogs played a similar role to the canaries that used to be kept in coal mines to warn the



miners of coal gas—they would sicken and die before the miners did, because they were more sensitive to the gas.

The recovery of the tree frogs in Matadero Creek has been very slow. I tried restocking the creek with tadpoles from Lake Lagunita on the Stanford Campus twice in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Reportedly, other individuals have tried on other occasions. A more ambitious project was carried out in the spring of 2000 by local Girl Scout troops and reported in that summer's issue of this newsletter. However, each of these efforts failed or at best resulted in very modest increases in the small number of tree frogs remaining in our neighborhood.

It is worth noting that Barron Creek did not suffer this pollution and has served as a "reservoir" for the tree frogs that are slowly repopulating Barron Park. It is not known whether or not the decline in numbers of our tree frogs has any connection to the worldwide decline in amphibians during these same years,

**Small Fish**

On a happier note, the sticklebacks are back in Matadero Creek—see the photo of a stickleback. These small fish (about 1.5–2

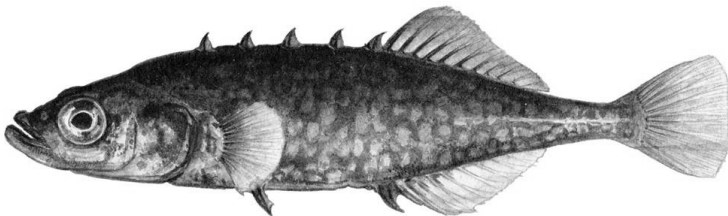
inches long) build nests for their eggs, which the male defends with his life. He also protects the young by carrying them in his mouth. Mosquito fish planted by the local Mosquito Abatement District are more common than the sticklebacks. They are slightly smaller and these fish, sometimes present in great numbers, are the "minnow" that children try to catch in Matadero Creek

**Marsh and slow-current vegetation**

The bright green leafy plant growing some years in the water of Matadero Creek below the Bikepath Bridge is watercress—the same pricey cress that you can buy at a few upscale grocers. While I can't vouch for the safety of eating this cress, I know that some people have occasionally harvested small amounts (a little bit of cress goes a long way). In the summer and fall, the creek is full of long strings of green algae, somewhat slimy to the touch but providing a rich environment for invertebrates, tadpoles and the smaller fish.

Above the Bikepath Bridge there are cattails, which are tending to spread downstream. The Barron Creek Sedimentation Basin has a well-developed cattail marsh, but this marsh is periodically removed

(scraped away) by the SCVWD as a necessary part of their flood control channel maintenance (vegetation removal) program.



**BEFORE WE LIVED HERE—THE VEGETATION MAP**

At this point in the article, I am going to stop talking about the modern creeks and discuss what they were probably like at the dawn of the historical era in Barron Park—the mid-Nineteenth Century. Please see the Map of the Barron Park Area about 1840 and its accompanying legend. This map has been enlarged and adapted from a small portion of the map drawn in 1964 by Professor Alan K. Brown of Stanford, who produced a marvelous depiction of the creeks and native vegetation of the entire Stanford-Palo Alto area as they existed about 1840. His map also includes the "roads" then existing (think ox-cart paths and stock trails). I have checked his depiction of the large oaks against the earliest aerial photos that I have of Barron Park (1941 and 1948) and it looks like he also was working off aerial photos—perhaps even earlier ones.

I scanned the area of his map that included Barron Park, enlarged it and modified it with my knowledge of the Barron Creek channel, distributaries and wetlands near both creeks. Since his map did not include any modern street grid overlay, I created one in order that the reader can match up 1840 channels with today's streets. The street grid also includes the railroad that used to run where the Regional Bikepath runs today, and the thin black line shows the property boundary between Mayfield Farm and the Stanford Lands to the north and west and the Maybelle Tract to the south.

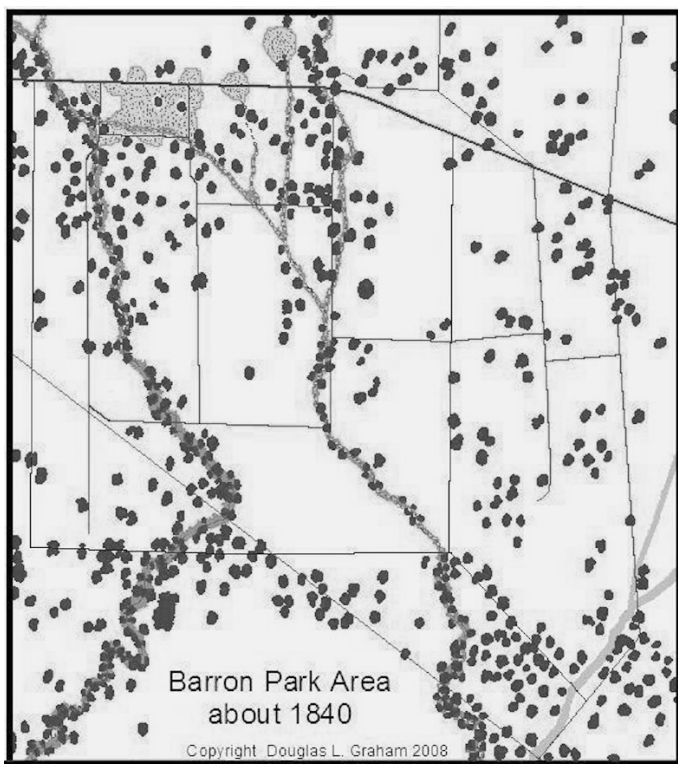
The dark blobs on my map are the large oaks, shown as they probably existed in 1840, based on the Professor Brown's map, and aerial photos. I then added other oaks that I surmised to have been present, based on the present-day creek channels and those additional channels presumed to exist in 1840. There was certainly a rich riparian vegetation corridor along each creek. Matadero Creek may have looked much like the photograph that is shown herein, taken by Larry Stafford in 1974 on the Bol Park stretch. Under the canopy of the heritage Valley Oaks (deciduous) and Coast Liveoak existed a secondary canopy of California Buckeye, Toyon, maybe California Bay (Laurel) and certainly lots of Poison Oak.

There were also probably “chimiles” where Chimalus Avenue was laid out about 80 years later (not shown on my map). The terms Chamise, Chamisal or Chimiles all refer to coyote brush (greasewood) scrub. There are Chamise shrubs growing along the Regional Bikepath today, especially in the Strawberry Hill area near the undeveloped portion of the Gunn H.S. campus.

I have shown seasonal wetlands in the areas where overflows from the 1955, 1962 and 1983 floods pooled. There were probably more such areas in Barron Park, including the possibility of one existing near La Para Avenue below (east of) Laguna Avenue.

**THE GEOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE CREEKS**

**The Knolls of Barron Park**



**Barron Park area about 1840**

**Key:**

- Grassland
- Oaks, Valley & Live
- Riparian Vegetation
- Creeks & Seasonal Wetlands
- Arastradero Road in 1840
- Selected Modern Streets
- Railroad (1906-1964)

In 1840, as in the present time, Matadero and Barron Creeks both debouched from the foothills just above the area that became Barron Park. There were some oak-studded knolls in our area, outliers of the foothills. Some of the knolls remain today, most notably the gently-sloped and oak-studded ridge that we call Roble Ridge and Matadero Hill, after the streets that provide access to the minimum-one-acre properties in that area.

Other knolls were removed to facilitate land development, like the small one southeast of Strawberry Hill that inspired the Barron Park street name “El Cerrito” (“little hill” is the accepted translation from the Spanish). It was removed to build the football stadium for Gunn High School. Strawberry Hill itself was cut into by the railroad, then mostly removed for the VA Hospital Golf Course, then rebuilt for the Regional Bikepath, and next carved into more deeply for the flood control diversion from Barron Creek to Matadero Creek (more on this in the future Parts Three and Four of this article). Finally, Strawberry Hill was partially enlarged again with the extra soil from

the flood culvert excavation. These small knolls and ridges are the first hills that rise above the alluvial fans at the edge of the valley we live in.

**Uplift and Subsidence**

Our valley lies between the giant crustal blocks containing the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range (East Bay hills), which have been uplifted over the past several million years. The valley is



partly filled by San Francisco Bay: the crustal block underlying the valley has subsided during the same time period. Erosion during this time has filled the valley (the bay and the “flat land” at its edges) with some 20,000 feet or about four vertical miles of debris. Our neighborhood sits at the edge of this “bay fill” and is raised more than 50 feet above sea level only because the rate of deposition of stream-carried erosional debris (alluvium) has locally exceeded the rate of subsiding of the underlying bedrock.

In the foothills, our creek channels have steep gradients and downcutting is rapid. Silt, sand, and small gravel are easily carried downstream during freshets. During major floods, larger rocks are moved. However, when the creeks debouch from the hills, the situation suddenly changes: the gradients flatten, the current cannot carry such a load, and most of the larger and heavier particles drop out. This tends to raise the bottom of the creek channels. This happens on both creeks about where they pass under Foothill Expressway. During high volume storm flows and floods, this creek bed material is eroded and pushed further downstream. If the channel bottom has been raised enough, the channel becomes inadequate to carry the amount of water and sediment load, which slows the current. The creek then overtops the bank and downhill away from the channel, depositing most of its material as the speed slows drastically. Over time, in semi-arid climates like coastal California, this produces an “alluvial fan” wherever a

watercourse debouches from a mountain range. The alluvial fans merge, leaving depressions between them.

**The “natural levees”**

At the detail level, the net result of this is to deposit a “natural levee” on each side of each creek channel in the alluvial fan. The situation is exactly the same as in a delta where a river joins the ocean or a lake. If you look carefully, you can see these levees on our local creeks. Especially prominent is the rise on each side of San Francisquito Creek at the El Camino Bridge. If you ride a bicycle the levees make themselves unavoidably evident to you.

In Barron Park the levees are also present on our smaller creeks. However, in some places where the creeks have historically overbanked, the rise is slight and the gradient is so gentle as to be nearly imperceptible to the eye. A good example is the natural levee with a height of about one or two feet, on the right bank of Matadero Creek near the Matadero Avenue Bridge. Here, the gradient down the nearby 3500 block of Whitsell Street from Matadero Avenue to Kendall Avenue is very gentle but still enough to have caused, in 1983, at least several acre-feet of overflowed creek water to run down and inundate the 500 block of Kendall to the depth of at least 30 inches, finally pooling behind the berm of El Camino Real.

**The floodplain in Barron Park**

ALL of Barron Park is in the “floodplain” (read alluvial fan) of one or more of the creeks. When FEMA produced its revised flood hazard map after the Barron-Matadero Flood Control Project was completed, it advised many Barron Park homeowners that their properties had been removed from the floodplain. This is true, but somewhat misleading, because their map pertains only to the 100-year flood and smaller floods. It is worth remembering that we could have the “1,000-year flood,” or even larger ones, in any given year. I will discuss this more in future Parts Two, Three and Four of this article.

**Alluvium in your soil**

The soil in your yard is weathered creek alluvium, derived from rocks between here and Foothill Park and other high spots in the foothills. The closer you live to a creek (particularly one of the larger ones), the more likely you are to have creek-worn rounded gravel or stones in your topsoil. However, if you dig deeper (more than several feet), and into undisturbed layers,

you may be unearthing material from many thousands of years ago. Just as in a delta, the creek channels change location over long periods of time. You may find large-particle-sized alluvium in the hole you dig even though your yard may not be near a current channel.

**THE CREEK RAN DRY**

**Intense pumping and falling water tables**

In the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries in the mid-Peninsula and Santa Clara Valley areas, farmers and town dwellers alike depended upon wells for their domestic water and irrigation supplies. The shallow aquifers were quickly depleted, and by the 1920s everyone was having to deepen their wells or go dry. Chatham Forbes, in his oral history taken by Ann Knopf in 1977, discusses his Grandfather Colonel Sebastian Jones’ problem in drilling deeper for water in 1923 or 1924, to supply the new California Military Academy in the “Barron” Mansion. Ernie Johnson, in another oral history, also discussed the falling water table in telling of his problems in running the private Water Company that supplied the area around Los Robles Avenue. Cornelis Bol had to drill deeper when he took over the Emway Water Company that supplied the Matadero Avenue area. Allan Schwartz took short oral histories in 1972, focusing on Matadero Creek, from Josina Bol and a Miss Calderwood, who were long-term residents of Roble Ridge at the time. According to Schwartz’s manuscript, Miss Calderwood said “that she had heard, many years ago from Dr. Carruth, that when Dr. Carruth first took up residence on Roble Ridge the creek had run all year long. She said that the people living along the creek used to use wells for water, but now the water table had fallen so far that this was no longer done, and the creek simply dried up in the summer after it left the foothills.” According to Josina Bol, Dr. Carruth was the first resident of Roble Ridge, “having bought (his) land ... in the late twenties.”

**Artificial land subsidence**

The irrigation pumping was so intense along the Bayshore fringe where truck garden crops and flowers were grown from Menlo Park to Alviso, that deep aquifers were crushed by the weight of the layers over them, after they were pumped dry of the water they had held. This led to serious land subsidence by the 1940s, up to six or eight feet in some areas. The subsidence

zone in the area that now comprises the neighborhoods of south Palo Alto extended up above Middlefield Road. This widespread subsidence was one of the major reasons for the creation of the Water Conservation District, which was one of the agencies that joined to form today’s Santa Clara Valley Water District. The subsidence stimulated the development of our county’s far-sighted system of percolation ponds on major streams in the Santa Clara Valley, such as along Los Gatos Creek next to Highway 17.

I believe that this artificially-caused subsidence, and the resultant steepening of creek gradients, was at least part of the reason for the acceleration of downcutting along Matadero Creek in Barron Park in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. In the first decade I lived here, from 1972 through 1982, the Matadero Creek channel at my property deepened about two feet, from approximately twelve feet deep to about fourteen. This was startling and worrisome, since it speeded up the erosion of our creek bank. The Water District eventually dealt with this by installing “levelers,” small rock and concrete dams in the creek bottom, which stopped the downward erosion in the immediate vicinity.

To summarize my opinion of the effects of the excessive pumping, it first diminished the low-water flow of Matadero Creek, then resulted in a steeper creek gradient, which caused an acceleration of downcutting in the creek channel, the ramifications of which are still perturbing the system today. This is an excellent example of “The Law of Unintended Consequences.”

**OUR CREEKS ON HISTORIC MAPS**

Matadero Creek (Arroyo del Matadero) appears on an early map (probably drawn about 1859). “Matadero” translates to “slaughtering place,” which probably referred to a traditional place to pen rounded-up cattle and slaughter them for their hides. The spot may have been at the site of the former Ohlone Village, near the donkey pasture and the VA Hospital Laundry Plant. Or, just as likely, it could have been farther upstream, perhaps near the Page Mill Road exit from I-280. From about 1825 to 1845, first the missions and then the ranchos supplied most of the rawhide to the burgeoning leather and shoe industry of Boston and the New England mill towns, and our creek was probably one of the places from which the trade was supplied.

Barron Creek is not shown on that 1859

map. On the 1863 plat of the Robles family's "Rancho Santa Rita" (Rancho Rinconde San Francisquito), a poorly drawn stream which is probably meant to be Matadero Creek is labeled "Chemise Creek" (sic). Both creeks then appear on the 1880 Santa Clara County map, but Barron Creek (unlabeled) is shown as already channelized, and the channel is definitely in the wrong place. The 1892 Stanford Survey repeats the error. The 1890 County map has Barron Creek (still unlabeled) moved even further from the correct location. Another map from the 1890s labels Matadero Creek as "Barron Creek" and leaves the real Barron Creek unlabeled.

The first USGS topographic map, dated 1895, shows Barron Creek flowing into Matadero Creek in a highly unlikely location (near today's Laguna Avenue). The 1908 Stanford Survey shows both creeks more-or-less correctly, but shows "Dry Creek" (Barron) dwindling, splitting into multiple distributaries, and ending about where La Para runs into La Donna nowadays. I believe this is getting close to the truth, but I think the major channel and at least one of the distributaries probably crossed the line of today's El Camino Real before ending in a seasonal wetland. The moral of this story is: There are probably inaccuracies on any map, no matter how prestigious the author or organization producing it—so read your maps with a skeptical eye. I am sure there must be mistakes in the maps I have drawn, and I welcome corrections and suggestions for improvements.

### THE CREEKS ON MAYFIELD FARM

When Elisha Crosby bought a 250-acre parcel of Rancho Santa Rita from the Robles family in 1853 and named it Mayfield Farm (now Barron Park), the creeks were probably as shown on the modern "1840 Map" discussed above. As far as I know, Crosby did no channeling of either creek during the brief span of his ownership. He did, however, build a comfortable and commodious two-story farm house, which was then the first frame building in what is now South Palo Alto. He built it close to the County Road (El Camino Real), in an area that I believe to have been between two Barron Creek distributaries in what is now the Woodland Park Tract (Magnolia Way neighborhood). It must have been on a slight rise—he would not have wanted to build his house in the middle of a seasonal wetland. This supposition is supported by the fact that, in the 1983 flood, the flood water passed around each side of the spot

where the "Barron Mansion" had stood until 1936. The modern floods have given us important clues about the unrecorded past. He also built his house up: the first floor was probably about six feet above ground level.

In 1857, Crosby went bankrupt and the farm was sold to Sarah Wallis at a sheriff's sale. Sarah built a large and ornate Victorian gingerbread mansion onto the front of Crosby's farmhouse. I don't think that Sarah channeled either creek during her 21-year ownership. In the crash of 1877-78 she and her husband Judge Joseph Wallis lost most of their fortune and Sarah sold the mansion and farm to Edward Barron in 1878.

### Edward Barron channelizes Dry Creek

Barron must have acted almost immediately to bring unruly Barron Creek (then known as Dry Creek) under control, since the 1880 County map shows it converted to a straight channel from the point where today's Laguna and Los Robles Avenues intersect, straight east to the County Road (now El Camino Real). This was the first "flood control project" in Barron Park history, and surely was meant to keep the normal storm flows from eroding croplands, as well as protecting the mansion

and its beautifully landscaped grounds. I presume that Barron also had the multiple distributary channels filled in at this time, which may not have been difficult since most of them were probably quite shallow, and the ditching of the main channel must have provided a considerable amount of fill. He also laid out the farm lane that later became Los Robles Avenue, the first street in the interior of the land that became Barron Park.

### The articles to come

I hope you have enjoyed this first installment in the multi-part history of the creeks in Barron Park. The plan is to cover flooding and early flood control projects in the 1950s, 60s and 70s on both creeks in part two (probably to be published in the fall newsletter). Part three should cover flood control and other creek issue since 1978 and should appear in the winter 2009 issue. The final part four should appear in the Spring Issue and will cover the Barron Creek Diversion and Matadero Creek Bypass Project of the 1990s, as well as some more recent happenings.

If you have questions to ask me or information to provide on the creeks and their history, I encourage you to reach me at [dgrahampaca@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dgrahampaca@sbcglobal.net), or at my home at 984 Iilma Way, 650-493-0689.

## NEW ATHLETIC FIELDS AT GUNN



**Under construction at Gunn High School: a new baseball field, softball field, and soccer field. Also being replaced: the football field, with artificial sod. Work on a new swimming pool is also planned.**





# DONATIONS TO THE BOL PARK RESTORATION PROJECT NOW TAX-DEDUCTIBLE

By Sue Luttner



Stewart neighborhood gardeners Shirley Finrock and Carla Bliss

have achieved another step in their efforts to restore native habitat to the corner of Bol Park by Matadero. Donations to the restoration fund are now tax-deductible, as described below.

Construction of the flood-control creek bypass in the 1990s had left the ground compacted, and invasive grasses were defying local efforts to get natives established above the culvert. In 2007, the Garden Club of Palo Alto approved a grant to Shirley and Carla to help pay for soil amendments and new plants in that strip of Bol Park. Neighborhood gardeners have been donating their labor, but they need more money for materials and a bit of professional help.

If you want to make a tax-deductible donation to a legacy garden that will restore native habitat and respect the local ecosystem, you can do it through the Friends of the Palo Alto Parks, which is a 401c non-profit organization.

Payee: Friends of the Palo Alto Parks  
Designate: Bol Park Corner Restoration Project

**Bush Anemone (*Carpenteria californicus*), one of the native species planted as part of the Bol Park restoration project. Among other advantages, landscaping with natives attracts native pollinators.**

Mail to: FOPAP  
Suite 27, 425 Grant Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94306

If you would like to make a donation in the memory of a friend or relative—or if you have any comments, positive or negative, about the installation of low-water landscaping across the street from 3503-05-07 Laguna Avenue—please call Carla Bliss at 650-493-8194 or email Shirley Finrock, [safinrock@comcast.net](mailto:safinrock@comcast.net).

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We had a very nice turn out of members signing up in time to receive this delightful summer newsletter. Welcome to new members and welcome back to continuing members. I hope you have enjoyed some of the very special BPA events that your membership supports, such as the annual May Fete and this year's reinvented Home Tour. It's always great to see friends and neighbors at these events. Watch the newsletter for future events. Have a great summer and thank you for your generous support!

## BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Barron Park Association  
724 Barron Avenue  
Palo Alto, California 94306

Nancy "Jo" Hamilton

**EDITOR**

Patrick Coyne

**DESIGNER**

Lynn Melena, Gwen Luce,

Doug Moran

**COPY EDITORS**

Douglas Graham, Sue Luttner, Lynn Melena, Doug Moran, Bob Moss

**CONTRIBUTORS**

## Help Support the Barron Park Donkeys!

All those who care about Perry and Niner seek to guarantee their proper on-going care and shelter, as well as to ensure that assets will be available for health concerns as the donkeys age. The handlers hope that those generous neighbors who have contributed in the past will consider increasing their support this year. Contributions for the donkeys' care may be sent to: The Palo Alto Donkey Project, ACTERRA (Action



for a Sustainable Earth), 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303-4303. The check must be made out to "ACTERRA-Palo Alto Donkey Fund." All of the above must be included.

For further information about making a contribution on behalf of the donkeys, or if you would like information about how to become one of the volunteer donkey handlers, please call Bob Frost, 493-8272 or email at [bobfrost34@yahoo.com](mailto:bobfrost34@yahoo.com).



# Our Creeks: Wildlife highways, not just habitat

By Doug Moran

Residents on Roble Ridge have commented on there being many more deer than normal this year (the photo shows two fawns in a garden). With this being a dry year, they probably have followed the creeks looking for better habitat. And with more deer, it is more likely that one will get flushed from its bed during the day.

On Sunday May 4th, one was. Residents were surprised to see a young deer trotting down La Donna. They first had to discourage the deer from heading towards El Camino, and then attempted to direct the deer back to Matadero Creek. However, the deer was not easily persuaded: The help of the Police and Animal Control was ultimately needed.

In 2004 there was a similar situation. There were several instances of deer wandering on Matadero Avenue and Chimalus in late morning. Motorists saw deer on our streets late in the evening. Several residents in the 700-800 block of Matadero became accustomed to being watched by deer waiting to emerge from the creek at twilight. And one became aware of the deer because her housecats would raise the alarm.

2004 was also a year of a spate of mountain lion sightings, although some of these reports turned out to be of bobcats. On Sunday June 6th, a bobcat was sighted in late morning on Hubbart Drive (near Gunn) and then an hour later near Bol Park. Initially identified as a mountain lion, it drew considerable attention, including at least one TV news van that stayed overnight.

Some speculated that it was a bobcat that was routinely seen on Roble Ridge. It was so acclimated to suburban living that it was seen around dawn walking the streets as if it owned them, only grudging giving way to people going to work. Others speculated that it had been following Adobe Creek and "gone exploring."

And this was not a new development: In 1982, friends staying in the

Creekside Inn in a room overlooking the creek saw a bobcat (although they called it a mountain lion).

I have gotten multiple reports of a grey fox (native species) around the Barron Creek sediment basin. And over the many years, I and others have seen red fox (non-native species) along the Matadero Creek corridor, from Roble Ridge and the donkey pasture to the 700-block.

The local wildlife evolved in a landscape in which the creek corridors were the highways along which they traveled. Not only did the creeks provide water for drinking, but that water produces dense vegetation which provides both shelter and food. These corridors are used not just by animals, but by birds, including those commuting between the bay and the coast.

When a creek turns from a natural environment to a concrete channel, it is thought that the animals will tend to backtrack and then head out overland to find an alternative pathway. Several such transitions occur in or near Barron Park.

After the mountain lion sightings, the City decided to try to determine whether there had been an undetected presence of mountain lions and put camera traps at several locations along several creeks (including Matadero). They "captured" images of many domestic cats and dogs and of common wild animals such as raccoons. But they didn't see any mountain lions. And I found it curious that bobcats and foxes were not among the animals they reported seeing.



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Linda Elder

Nancy Hamilton

Lydia Kou

Gwen Luce

Doug Moran

Mircea Voskerician



Committee / Activity Chairs

*Beautification:* Vacant

*Neighborhood Businesses Liaison:*

Mircea Voskerician

*Civic Affairs Liaison:* Doug Moran

*Creeks/Flood Control:* Christian Kalar

*Neighborhood Safety & Preparedness:*

Lydia Kou

*May Fete:* Vacant

*History:* Doug Graham

*Membership:* Linda Elder

*Natural Habitat & Environment:* Vacant

*Newsletter:* Nancy Hamilton

*Parks:* Vacant

*School Liaison:* Christian Kalar

*Seniors:* Vacant

*Traffic & Streets:* John King

*Welcoming:* Gwen Luce

*Zoning & Land Use:* Lynnne Melena



BPA meetings are held the 3rd

Tuesday of most months at 7:15 p.m.

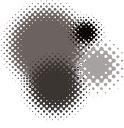
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